



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

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RUBEN PATRICK VALDES CONVICTED OF CONSPIRACY TO SMUGGLE ALIENS

(*El Paso, Texas*) **United States Attorney Johnny Sutton** announced today that, a federal jury this afternoon returned a guilty verdict against 33 year old **RUBEN PATRICK VALDES** on one count of Conspiracy to Smuggle Aliens for Commercial Advantage and Private Financial Gain and a substantive count of Alien Smuggling for Commercial Advantage and Private Financial Gain.

Valdes and his brother, 31 year old Roman Martin Valdes, were the leaders of a major alien smuggling organization, operating in Mexico and the United States. Evidence presented at trial revealed that the brothers recruited American truck drivers from bars and clubs in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico to use their commercial vehicles, usually tractor-trailers, to transport aliens from El Paso, Texas, to various locations throughout the United States. The truck drivers were offered a substantial fee to transport groups of aliens. The aliens were first smuggled from Ciudad Juarez to El Paso, Texas, then transported to various staging areas in El Paso, Texas by members of the Valdes alien smuggling organization. The aliens were kept at the staging locations until they were delivered to the truck drivers for transportation to other locations in the United States. Furthermore, the brothers organized the smuggling of at least one to five loads of illegal aliens per week, each load containing between five to one hundred aliens between early 1999 and mid 2002. The El Paso Sector of the U.S. Border Patrol estimates that between January 29, 1999 and March 28, 2002, federal agents detained and interviewed more than 900 undocumented aliens whose presence in the United States was linked to the Valdes smuggling organization.

Evidence elicited at trial showed that on July 27, 2002, a load of aliens was illegally transported by the Valdes alien smuggling organization, from El Paso, Texas to Dallas, Texas. When the tractor trailer holding the aliens stopped in Dallas County, Texas, the truck driver discovered that two of the aliens were dead and several others were in critical condition as a result of the inhumane conditions in the tractor trailer. The truck drivers, Troy Phillip Dock and Jason Steven Sprague, along with several other members of the Valdes alien smuggling organization, were indicted in the Eastern District of Texas, in the Sherman Division, under the federal Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) for the deaths of the aliens. Border Patrol agents linked the defendants in that indictment and the smuggled alien load to the Valdes brothers' smuggling enterprise. Both truck drivers have pled guilty in the Eastern District of Texas.

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“Thousands of poor illegal immigrants from Mexico and other countries are cheated and taken advantage by greedy, unscrupulous traffickers who take their money and promise them a future only to abuse and mistreat them. Today’s conviction should put those individuals on notice that the United States Attorney’s office will not hesitate to prosecute those who traffic in human beings,”stated U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton.

The maximum penalty for the offenses for which Ruben Valdes was convicted is death or any term of years or for life in federal prison, however, the government has not sought the death penalty in this case. Also, the offenses carry a fine of up to \$250,000.00 each. Ruben Valdes’ sentencing is tentatively set for June 18, 2003 at 8:30 a.m. Roman Valdes, who pled guilty on April 11, 2003, to Count I–Conspiracy to Smuggle Aliens, faces up to eight years in federal prison. His sentencing date has not been set.

U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton also commended the efforts of federal agents with the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement of the Department of Homeland Security (formerly the Immigration and Naturalization Service), Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (formerly Border Patrol), Mexican federal authorities and the Mexican Attorney General’s office for bringing the Valdez brothers to justice. The success of this joint law enforcement endeavor is another example of the excellent cooperation between law enforcement officials of the United States and Mexico.

This case was prosecuted by Special Assistant United States Attorney Tom Roepke and Assistant United States Attorney Greg McDonald.

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